

**"Working Towards National Development is Everybody's Responsibility"-**  
**Meet The People Tour 2023 - Part I**

**Boosting Farmers' Annual Income**

Enhancing Agriculture is among the top priorities of the Barrow Administration, and it commits to making farming a viable source of livelihood for Gambians. Fertiliser was subsidised at D1,150 per bag in 2023 in preparation for the farming season. The time and affordability of fertiliser doubled, with the good rains playing a crucial role in the bumper harvest this year.



Announcement of the price of groundnuts for the upcoming trade season is always the highlight of the annual Meet The People Tour; thus, most of the farmers celebrated when President Barrow announced at his first meeting at Pakau Njogu in Upper Nuimi District.

The price of groundnut for the 2023 Trade Season is pegged at GMD 38,000 per tonne, an increase of GMD 6,000 from last year. With this price, the Barrow Government has subsidised the world market price by GMD 18,000 to boost the annual income of farmers further and to motivate more Gambians to take up farming as a business venture to improve their lives.

### **Ensuring Food Security**

The President also urged farmers to sell their groundnuts to the National Food Security, Processing and Marketing Corporation - NFSPMC (formerly GGC), explaining that would empower the government to support the agriculture sector further. He revealed the plan for directly purchasing the groundnuts, as NFSPMC partners with a commercial bank to ensure instant payment.

Also, President Barrow emphasised the role of citizens in ensuring there is food security, stating that his government is encouraging Gambians to take up rice production to feed the nation with locally produced rice. Currently, The Gambia imports over 70% of the rice consumed in the country, thus pursuing private-sector investment in rice production.

### **The Gambia Recognised for Controlling Corruption and Ruling Justly**

The Gambia, under the leadership of President Adama Barrow, is amongst the three African countries recognised for adhering to the values and principles of democracy and good governance. It has been awarded the Millennium Challenge Corporation Threshold by demonstrating its commitment to democracy and benefits from the MCC Compact programme to support its development trajectory.

Speaking to the rural population in the North Bank Region on his government programmes and development policies guided by the National Development Plan 2023 - 2027, President Barrow mentioned that his Government is determined to undertake measures to improve the livelihoods of Gambians, his motivation for practising good governance.

According to The Gambia Forecast Year - FY24 scorecard, the country has been scored high for ruling justly, controlling corruption, protecting civil liberty and respecting political rights.

President Barrow told the gathering at Dobo, Central Badibou in the North Bank Region, that the Millennium Challenge Corporation - MCC granted The Gambia the Threshold and Compact for the country's advancement due to his democratic approach to governance. The Gambia FY24 also scored the government 78% for Governance effectiveness, 87% for respect for the rule of law and 98% for Freedom of Information.

President Adama Barrow declared that his Government will continue striving for policies that ensure economic independence to bring more infrastructure development, emphasising, "Gambians elected me to advance their lives. Therefore, we must collect and invest tax in building our infrastructure without donor restrictions."

According to the President, the Government is working with the MCC on implementing the Compact to improve the management of the country's maritime resources, expansion of the port and development of dry ports to revive river transportation. This news augurs well with the people of Kaur and other communities in the Saloums and Nianija, for they have been yearning for the revival of the Kaur Wharf for years.

## **Universal Access to Electricity**

Responding to the demand for access to electricity in many rural settlements, the President renewed his promise that by 2025, there would be universal access to electricity that would connect many communities to the electricity network, adding that the project initially excluded over 30 communities that have now been included ensuring that "no one is left behind".

## **Construction of Standard Rural Roads**

President Barrow is optimistic that there can be no serious development without good road networks nationwide. Having completed significant roads and bridges within a short period gives Gambians hope that, indeed, it is possible to fast-track development if the Government is determined.

Using innovative funding mechanisms, the Barrow administration had delivered on its promise to transform the Capital city, Banjul. Following a site visit at the ongoing construction of roads linking three districts in the North Bank, the President promised to deliver the 86-kilometre rural road initiated in 2021 - the famous Hakalang road, along with others currently under construction in the North Bank Region, in 2024.

During meetings held at Badibou Dobo and Kuntaur Fula Kunda, more communities in the North and Central River Regions demand feeder roads connecting them to the highways.

## **Right to Access Clean Drinking Water**

Demand for clean drinking water is another major priority of the Barrow Government. It works with partners to provide industrial water supply systems to numerous communities. Already, 110 borehole points have been identified, and funds are available to complete sixty-five with industrial water supply systems.



To make clean drinking water accessible to several rural communities, President Barrow switched on the Solar-powered Water Supply Systems in Kerr Sulay in the North Bank Region and Jahaur in the Central River North, which brought excitement to the many villagers who witnessed the ceremonies on Wednesday, 22nd November 2023.



President Barrow, appreciative of the partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, said, “Access to clean water is a human right, and I must thank our partners and commend the communities for their patience,” adding his Government is working with partners to provide water supply systems to communities.



The Japan International Cooperation Agency - JICA in a token of friendship, provided a grant to The Gambia Government to meet the water needs of the rural population. Under JICA IV, the water systems in Kerr Sulay and Jahaur have tanks of 50,000 and 30,000 litre capacities, respectively. The cluster communities around the two settlements would enjoy their right to access clean drinking water.



Furthermore, these installations of solar-powered water supply systems will contribute to improved health, enhance the government's clean energy policy drive, and reduce the effects of climate change. Girls and women would be free from the burden and struggle of finding water for the family, and hygiene and cleanliness would improve.

According to the Director of Water Resources, Lamin Mai Touray, the water pumping machine system is guaranteed for twenty years, and the pump has a year guarantee. He said to sustain the facilities, the concerned communities have a responsibility to put a payment system in place to replace the pumps while the government works on providing similar facilities to other communities.

### **Drinking Points Key in Enhancing Livestock Production**

In a similar site visit at Jimbala Chendu, a border community in the Lower Saloum, cattle and livestock owners in Jimbala Cluster are equally excited that a 20,000-liter capacity water supply system had been inaugurated. The head of the village, Alhajie Chendu Ceesay, said the drinking point saved them from migrating to Nianija seeking water for their cattle.

The excited President of the Livestock Owners Association, Ebrima Jallow, narrates, “In the past, we used to migrate with our cattle to Casamance in search of water. However, this year, since the rains ended, we stayed because we now have a steady water source for our cattle.”



According to the Project Director at the Small Ruminants Production Enhancement Project, Mr Mamud Njie, the drinking point at Jimbala Chendu prevents three thousand animals in the area from migrating to Cassamance in search of drinking water. He also revealed that Islamic Development Bank is partnering with The Gambia Government to provide twenty boreholes at strategic drinking points to enhance animal production in the country.



## **"Working Towards National Development is Everybody's Responsibility"**

Speaking on the tour theme "Working Towards National Development is Everybody's Responsibility" at Badibou Dobo, President Barrow urged all Gambians to unite to advance the country. He described the Government's efforts towards development as evident. He advised people to pay taxes, saying the Government has the potential to collect double its current collection of GMD5 billion and would increase to meet the development needs of the population.



## **Youth Empowerment**

In a bid to encourage young people in business enterprises, a model multipurpose centre is under construction at Farafenni, Upper Badibou in the North Bank Region. President Barrow visited the site to see the progress of work while on the Meet the People Tour. Upon completion, the center will provide a hub for various activities and initiatives aimed at empowering The Gambia's youth.



The President raised concern the many of our young people perished at sea due to hazardous journeys in search of better opportunities. Migration is an inherent part of human existence, however, the “backway” migration trend syndrome is causing havoc to families and by extension the country.

To address this challenge, the President announced that his Government is partnering with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on employment opportunities for skilled, unskilled and professional Gambians to work in Saudi. That would provide safe and viable alternatives and opportunities for youths in seeking better prospects outside The Gambia.



Visiting a young Gambia metal worker, Alhajie Cham, at his workshop at Farafenni, President Barrow said he was excited that Mr Cham is producing machines that would help farmers in mechanised farming and offload the struggle and hard work associated with agriculture.



Alhajie Cham, who was determined to develop his skills and business in metal and woodwork work, was found with over a dozen young people employed, amongst them returnees from illegal migration. Mr Cham briefed President Barrow about his work. He was delighted that the Barrow Government has created a conducive environment for Gambians to explore and unlock the potential in the country, including roads and electricity infrastructures.



Access to electricity is amongst the facilities that he was most delighted about, stating, “I recall the times when we crossed the border to access electricity for us to work. Now, we no longer do that because we have 24 hours of electricity supply here in Farafenni, and we are doing a lot.”

President Barrow commended Alhajie Cham’s efforts in producing machines for groundnut threshing, machines to produce chicken feeds and household furniture amongst others. These align with the Government’s policy in creating 150,000 private sector job opportunities in five years.

## **Science and Technology in Sustainable Development**

The Gambia Government is committed to setting standards in the STEM and TVET education to sustain national development, emphasising on skills and knowledge to unlock and harness the potential in the youthful population of the Smiling Coast.

To see the impact of the Government's programme, President Barrow visited the Gambia Shanghai Initiative at the Chamen Center in Badibou and saw a demonstration of how organic waste is being transformed into gas and a poultry project the youths are involved in. Over 40 young people are enrolled annually to learn new techniques in poultry, horticulture, vegetable gardening, and livestock rearing, amongst others.

The Chamen Centre provides the youth with skills they can develop and become employers or employees in various fields of food production, thus ensuring food security in the country.

### **Kaur Science Lab Established**

At Kaur, a Science Lab has been established with the support of Holland Foundation. Both male and female students are actively engaged in sciences which, once upon a time, were perceived as male-dominated subjects.



Decentralising science labs in rural Gambia creates more significant opportunities for potential students to stay with their families and pursue their passion in the Sciences. President Barrow was informed during the tour of the Science Lab that students are also received from schools in Greater Banjul.



Natives of the area with expertise in the Sciences also return to share knowledge at the Kaur Science Lab, which will revive the once-famous Wharf and Trading town to its old glories.



Meet the People Tour provides opportunity for more insights to the development needs of Gambians and how the Government under President Adama Barrow is set to addressing them.

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